

Homily December 28/29, 2019

Feast of the Holy Family

This weekend we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family. We just heard in the Gospel that an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and instructed him to take Jesus and Mary to Egypt and stay there until he is told again by an angel that it is safe to return to Israel after the death of Herod. This was to fulfil an Old testament passage in Hosea that stated "Out of Egypt I called my son." Hosea 11:1 Many Bible scholars note that the Holy Family was in Egypt from when Jesus was an infant until he was around 4 years of age. So, Christ took His first footsteps and lived for the first few years of His life in a foreign country as an immigrant.

How many of us would be willing to move to a foreign country, on foot, carrying all of our possessions, to keep our families safe from persecution? Most of us have pretty comfortable lives here in the middle of the United States and have no fear or even thoughts of needing to leave our homeland for an unknown, far off place in order to live safely away from danger in our own homeland. Joseph trusted in God enough to be willing to make this perilous journey in order to keep his family safe.

Are we even willing to trust in God to teach our faith to our children? Or do we just leave it up to the Catechists? Our children learn their initial faith life from their parents. If we as parents have a lukewarm faith life, our children will probably also have a lukewarm faith life. All of us need to teach our faith to our children and grandchildren since they are the future of the Church. Our youth are the Church's strength and lifeblood. At the recent NCYC conference in Indianapolis, all of the attendees were blessed to watch a video broadcast from the Holy Father. In the video, Pope Francis gave each of the youth (and adults) in attendance a missionary charge to meet each person, especially those on the periphery and those who are suffering, to bring Christ to them. We are all one family in the eyes of God. We need to always see Christ in one another, regardless of the individual or the circumstance.

Today's second reading from St. Paul's letter to the Colossians (3:12-21) follows the Holy Father's advice at NCYC on how we should treat each other in our daily actions. St. Paul's words those many years ago still hold true to us today. Essentially St. Paul gave us guidelines as to how we should live our everyday lives as Christians. He closes this passage with words on how we need live out our family lives and what our responsibilities to each other as a family unit should be. We each have our

own role to play as a husband, wife, brother, sister, or child in our individual family units. I recommend that you read this passage again as a gentle reminder how we all should live as Christians, both towards our own families and also how we should treat others we meet in our lives.

Today's first reading from the Book of Sirach continues this same theme of how to treat each other within our families. Respect, reverence, and love for our immediate and also extended families are cherished attributes of a loving family life. It is easy to feel this way when times are good and hardships are few. But do we always share these same feelings to each other when times are tough, when we have disagreements with each other, when things do not go as we had hoped or planned? This scripture reading also tells us how we should treat our elderly family members, always with love and compassion.

We should not forget that the family unit is called the domestic church. This domestic church or *Ecclesia domestica* (CCC 1656) from the Second Vatican Council as I stated earlier is the center of a living radiant faith life for our families. This domestic church is where we all exercise what we are called to be in our own baptism, one of priest, prophet and king. Home is where we learn the joys of work, fraternal love, generous forgiveness, and above all divine worship in prayer.

All of this weekend's readings emphasize the strength we have as family units, when we work together for the common good. These same strengths and responsibilities also can be applied to our larger family, the family of our parish, and the family of our worldwide Church. If we treated all members of Christ's Church as one family, wouldn't the world be a better place?

May the joy and peace of the Lord be always with you.

Deacon Mark Bortle